

Veterans' Health Today

SUMMER 2006

**Don't Lose
Your Life
Trying to
Save It**

MOVE! It

**Health Care
for Travel**

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Your Identity**

**VA DESERT PACIFIC
HEALTHCARE NETWORK**



 **Department of
Veterans Affairs**

Don't Lose Your Life Trying to Save It



Each year, lives are lost when veterans try to do the right thing – the wrong way.

Treatment for stroke symptoms within the first 60 to 180 minutes can greatly reduce the mortality rate or the risk of serious, long-term disability. While quick action is vital, it is extremely important that the patient not drive him or herself to the hospital. According to Rene Haas, Patient Education Coordinator at the VA Long Beach Healthcare System, “Many of our vets with symptoms of stroke prefer to drive themselves to the hospital and end up dying or suffering greater disability than would otherwise occur because of that decision.”

“It is important that patients call 911,” says Dr. Marc Ofstein, Chief of the Medical Health Care Group at the VA Long Beach Healthcare System. “Because a stroke involves damage to the brain, driving can be dangerous for both the patient and other drivers. In addition, paramedics may be better able to direct the patient to centers

which can provide optimal stroke care – saving precious time.”

Stroke is the third leading cause of death in the United States, just behind cancer and heart disease. Each year, over 162,000 deaths and 600,000 new strokes are reported. These figures from the National Center for Health Statistics illustrate the seriousness of stroke.

A stroke occurs when the flow of blood to the brain is obstructed when either a blood vessel or artery bursts or is blocked by a clot. The loss of blood flow causes damage to brain tissue. There are two types of stroke. The most common type is an **ischemic** stroke, caused by a reduction of blood flow to the brain. Nearly 80% of all strokes are ischemic. A **hemorrhagic** stroke is caused by bleeding in the brain. The symptoms of these strokes may include:

☑ Numbness or weakness of the face or limbs, particularly if it involves one side of the body

- ☑ Vision problems, such as double vision, in one or both eyes
- ☑ Trouble speaking or understanding; confusion
- ☑ Trouble walking or keeping one's balance and coordination
- ☑ Severe headache (most commonly occurs only with strokes of the hemorrhagic type)

There are ways you can reduce your risk for stroke. “I cannot stress enough the role of the patient in preventing stroke,” says Dr. Ofstein. By working with your health care provider to control your high blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease, or high cholesterol, you can greatly reduce your risk for stroke. There are two other important factors: quitting smoking and getting your weight under control.

For more information about risk factors for stroke, contact your health care professional or visit www.myhealth.va.gov.

MOVE! IT

Sounds like a Sergeant, doesn't it? But the VA is introducing something which could be much more motivating! The VA has developed a weight management and physical activity program entitled MOVE! This new, national program is designed to help veterans lose weight, keep it off and improve their health. The program is divided into different levels to meet your individual needs.

The program emphasis is on health and wellness through nutrition and physical activity behavior change. The MOVE! program can be tailored to specifically meet your needs and focus on lifetime and lifestyle changes. Regular follow-up and support opportunities are built in to help the veteran lose weight and keep it off.

You can start MOVE! by completing a questionnaire that will help design a plan specifically to help you lose weight. A tailored set of handouts will be given to you addressing areas of concern. Your VA health care team in primary care can meet with you to set some beginning goals. They can also follow-up with you regularly to track your progress and help you continue to meet your goals.

After you have met with your primary care provider and incorporated some of the beginning goals, additional support may be available in the form of group sessions on nutrition, physical activity and tips for behavior/lifestyle change. You may also have one-on-one time with a VA health care team member such as a dietitian,

physical activity specialist, or a behavioral health expert.

Want to learn more?

If you have a computer, visit www.move.med.va.gov and complete the questionnaire. A questionnaire code will be given to you to take to your provider appointment, or you can print and bring the report. The code allows your VA health care team to review the answers to your questions. As you view the website, you will see many wonderful printable handouts that can provide additional information and encouragement as you partner with your provider to improve your health.

Don't have a computer? No problem! Your VA health care team and primary care provider can explain the program to you and give you more information about what it can do for you. You can complete the beginning questionnaire at the clinic or patient education center and the results can be entered into the computer there. You can then discuss the customized results with your provider and health care team and coordinate with them to create a life-long lifestyle change.



ATTENTION VETERANS

“Have you ever gone on vacation and felt like you forgot to do something before you left?”



Many veterans spend their well-deserved retirement traveling. If this sounds like you, then listen up because your health care just got easier. We know that obtaining health care while away from home can be a bit frustrating, maybe even confusing. VA is working to provide you with consistent quality health care, and our surveys show that we are succeeding. It is our goal that when you travel, you shouldn't have to worry about your health care needs being met or having unnecessary procedures because your records have been left behind.

VA has a plan to coordinate the health care needs of all veterans that use more than one hospital for primary care services. VA needs

your help in order to match that same quality health care that you receive at home while you are traveling. The plan asks veterans to choose one primary care provider at one preferred facility. A preferred facility is the VA hospital or clinic that you have chosen to use for your primary care needs. Ask your primary care provider to give you a clinical summary to take with you while you are traveling. If you seek treatment at another facility while traveling, you can give your clinical summary to the provider. It's that simple. If the provider has a clear picture about what treatment you may need, health care professionals and other resources can be used when and where they are needed the most. That is

how coordinated health care works. When unnecessary procedures are not performed, there will be more available resources for everyone else; every veteran benefits. Exceptions to this plan might be veterans that live five to six months in two locations and must be seen often at each site due to critical monitoring of certain illnesses or treatments like chemotherapy. Ask your primary care provider if this applies to you.

So before you travel, in addition to canceling the paper, forwarding the mail, and packing your bags, notify your provider or nurse. Be coordinated and travel worry free.

Safe travels, veterans, and as always, it is an honor to serve you.

When unnecessary procedures are not performed, there will be more available resources for everyone else; every veteran benefits.

Before traveling, every veteran should:

1. Inform your VA provider and pharmacy of the VA hospital you wish to handle your primary care needs.
2. Leave a temporary address and phone number with the hospital and pharmacy, with the starting date and the expected date of return.
3. Arrange to have routine refills sent to you through your chosen hospital/clinic, or by renewing on-line using MyHealth_eVet prescription refill. Allow approximately three weeks for your medications to arrive at your home or current temporary address.
4. In the event that you have a non-emergent change in medical condition or are seeking medical advice, first contact the provider at your chosen hospital. If you believe your medical condition to be emergent or life-threatening, call 911.

In return, veterans can expect to receive:

- ▶ Shorter wait times
- ▶ More appointment time slots
- ▶ A seamless, coordinated health plan
- ▶ Continued quality health care

PROVIDING SAFE CARE FOR VETERANS IS OUR PRIMARY CONCERN

Please tell us your ideas for improving patient safety at your VA Medical Center.

Send an email message to V22PatientSafety@med.va.gov



VA health care access and advice is just a phone call away, 24 hours a day . . .

VA TeleCare 1-877-252-4866

Call toll-free to speak with a nurse. Completely free, confidential answers to your health care questions 24 hours a day.

Please . . . Don't be a "No Show"

Help us serve you and **your fellow veterans** better.

Here is how you can help:

- ✓ If you cannot keep your scheduled appointment, always call to cancel as soon as possible.
- ✓ Your cancelled appointment will be offered to another veteran.
- ✓ Please inform us of changes in your address or phone number.

Thank you for your help!

PROTECTING YOU

The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) has learned that data containing identifying information (including names, social security numbers, and dates of birth) for millions of active duty and reserve service members has been stolen. Appropriate law enforcement agencies have launched full-scale investigations into this matter. Authorities believe it is unlikely the perpetrators targeted the items because of any knowledge of the data contents. It is possible that they remain unaware of the information which they possess or of how to make use of it. However, as a precautionary measure, the VA is taking all possible steps to protect and inform our veterans.

At this point there is no evidence that any missing data has been used illegally. However, the Department of Veterans Affairs is asking all veterans to be extra vigilant and to carefully monitor bank statements, credit card statements and any statements relating to recent financial transactions. If you notice unusual or suspicious activity, you should report it immediately to the financial institution involved and contact the Federal Trade Commission for further guidance.

The Department of Veterans Affairs strongly recommends that veterans closely monitor their financial statements and review the guidelines provided on the web page at www.firstgov.gov/veteransinfo or call 1 (800) FED INFO (1-800-333-4636) to get information about this situation and learn more about consumer identity protections.

What should I do if I detect a problem with any of my accounts?

The Federal Trade Commission

recommends the following four steps if you detect suspicious activity:

Step 1

Contact the fraud department of one of the three major credit bureaus:

- ▶ **Equifax:** 1-800-525-6285; www.equifax.com; P.O. Box 740241, Atlanta, GA 30374-0241
- ▶ **Experian:** 1-888-EXPERIAN (397-3742); www.experian.com; P.O. Box 9532, Allen, Texas 75013
- ▶ **TransUnion:** 1-800-680-7289; www.transunion.com; Fraud Victim Assistance Division, P.O. Box 6790, Fullerton, CA 92834-6790

Step 2

Close any accounts that have been tampered with or opened fraudulently.

Step 3

File a police report with your local police or the police in the community where the identity theft took place.

Step 4

File a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission by using the FTC's Identity Theft Hotline:

- ▶ By telephone: 1-877-438-4338
- ▶ Online at www.consumer.gov/idtheft
- ▶ By mail at Identity Theft Clearinghouse, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW, Washington DC 20580.

Where can I get more information?

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) has produced a booklet to help you remedy the effects of an identity

BREAKING NEWS: Stolen VA laptop computer found. There is no sign that personal data was accessed.

theft. It describes what steps to take, your legal rights, how to handle specific problems you may encounter on the way to clearing your name, and what to watch for in the future. The contents of the booklet, Taking Charge: Fighting Back Against Identity Theft, are available on-line at www.ftc.gov/bcp/online/pubs/credit/idtheft.htm. The state of California also has an excellent website at www.privacy.ca.gov.

VA has set up a manned call center that veterans may call to get information about this situation and learn more about consumer identity protections. Concerned veterans may call 1 (800) FED INFO (1-800-333-4636). The call center will operate from 8 am to 9 pm (EDT), Monday-Saturday as long as it is needed.



IDENTITY:

20 Thief-Thwarting Tips

AT HOME

1. Rent a post office box for incoming mail.
2. Opt out of receiving pre-approved credit offers for two years by calling 1-888-5OPTOUT.
3. Photocopy your credit cards. Store the copies in a safe place in case your cards are stolen.
4. Establish strong passwords for all accounts. Strong passwords contain a combination of numbers and letters (both upper and lower case).
5. Receive bills online instead of paper copies.
6. Pay bills by automatic deduction from your checking account.
7. Pick up new checks at the bank rather than having them mailed.
8. Buy a crosscut shredder for disposing of utility bills, pay stubs – anything that contains personal information.
9. If a “bank” calls and needs infor-

mation, don't give it to them. Instead, call them back at the number listed in your telephone book or a recent statement.

10. Store tax returns, bank statements – any item that contains personal information – in a locked file cabinet or safe.

AWAY FROM HOME

11. Store your purse or wallet in a safe place at work.
12. Hide your PIN input when using an ATM card.
13. Never discard ATM or credit card receipts in a public trash receptacle.
14. When shopping, carry receipts in your purse or wallet rather than a shopping bag.
15. Do not allow anyone to write your telephone number or SSN on your checks or receipts.

ONLINE

16. Never click a link in an email message if it urges you to verify or update your bank or credit card account information. Instead, call the institution using the number in your telephone book or recent statement.
17. Install a firewall to prevent hackers from obtaining personal data from your hard drive.
18. Never store passwords in your computer or configure your computer to remember passwords, especially on a laptop.
19. Password-protect files where you store sensitive personal data on your computer.
20. Before discarding an old computer, permanently remove information with a special data cleaning utility.



VA Desert Pacific Healthcare Network Vet Centers

Anaheim Vet Center

859 South Harbor Boulevard
Anaheim, CA 92805-5157
714-776-0161

Corona Vet Center

800 Magnolia Ave., Suite 110
Corona, CA 92879-3123
951-734-0525

East Los Angeles Vet Center

5400 E. Olympic Boulevard
Suite 150
Commerce, CA 90022-5147
323-728-9966

Las Vegas Vet Center

1919 S. Jones Blvd., Suite A
Las Vegas, NV 89146
702-251-7873

Los Angeles Vet Center

1045 W. Redondo Beach Boulevard
Suite 150
Gardena, CA 90247-4129
310-767-1221

San Bernardino Vet Center

155 W. Hospitality Lane, Suite 140
San Bernardino, CA 92408-3305
909-890-0797

San Diego Vet Center

2900 Sixth Avenue
San Diego, CA 92103-1003
619-294-2040

Sepulveda Vet Center

9737 Haskell Avenue
Sepulveda, CA 91343-1618
818-892-9227

Ventura Vet Center

790 E. Santa Clara, Suite 100
Ventura, CA 93001-2964
805-585-1860

Vista Vet Center

1830 West Drive, Suites 103/104
Vista, CA 92083-6125
760-643-2070

West Los Angeles Vet Center

5730 Uplander Way, Suite 100
Culver City, CA 90230-6615
310-641-0326

REACHING US IS EASY

★ VA Medical Centers

**VA Southern Nevada
Healthcare System**
P.O. Box 360001
Las Vegas, NV 89036
702-636-3000

**Mike O'Callaghan
Federal Hospital**
4700 Las Vegas Boulevard North
Las Vegas, NV 89191
702-653-2215

**VA Loma Linda
Healthcare System**
11201 Benton Street
Loma Linda, CA 92357
909-825-7084

**VA Long Beach
Healthcare System**
5901 East 7th Street
Long Beach, CA 90822
562-826-8000

**VA San Diego
Healthcare System**
3350 La Jolla Village Drive
San Diego, CA 92161
858-552-8585

**VA Greater Los Angeles
Healthcare System**
11301 Wilshire Boulevard
Los Angeles, CA 90073
310-478-3711

▲ Community Clinics

Anaheim
1801 W. Romneya Drive
3rd Floor, Suite 303
Anaheim, CA 92801
714-780-5400

Antelope Valley
547 W. Lancaster Blvd.
Lancaster, CA 93534
661-729-8655

Bakersfield
1801 Westwind Drive
Bakersfield, CA 93301
661-632-1800

Cabrillo
2001 River Avenue
Long Beach, CA 90810
562-388-8000



VA Southern Nevada
Healthcare System

Pasadena
420 W. Las Tunas Drive
San Gabriel, CA 91776
626-289-5973

San Luis Obispo
1288 Morro St., #200
San Luis Obispo, CA 93401
805-543-1233

Santa Ana
Bristol Medical Center
2740 S. Bristol Street
1st Floor, Suite 110
Santa Ana, CA 92704
714-825-3500

Santa Barbara
4440 Calle Real
Santa Barbara, CA 93110
805-683-1491

Sepulveda
16111 Plummer Street
Sepulveda, CA 91343
818-891-7711

South Los Angeles
3737 E. Martin Luther King Jr.
Blvd., Suite 515
Lynwood, CA 90262
310-537-6825

Sun City
28125 Bradley Road
Suite 130
Sun City, CA 92586
951-672-1931

Upland
1238 E. Arrow Highway,
No. 100
Upland, CA 91786
909-946-5348

Victorville
12138 Industrial Boulevard
Suite 120
Victorville, CA 92392
760-951-2599

Vista
1840 West Drive
Vista, CA 92083
760-643-2000

Whittier/Santa Fe Springs
10210 Orr and Day Road
Santa Fe Springs, CA 90670
562-864-5565

Chula Vista
835 3rd Avenue
Chula Vista, CA 91910
619-409-1600

Corona
800 Magnolia Avenue #101
Corona, CA 92879
951-817-8820

East Los Angeles
5400 E. Olympic Boulevard #150
City of Commerce, CA 90040
323-725-7557

Escondido
815 East Pennsylvania Avenue
Escondido, CA 92025
760-466-7020

Gardena
1251 Redondo Beach Boulevard
3rd Floor
Gardena, CA 90247
310-851-4705

Henderson
2920 Green Valley Parkway,
Suite 215
Henderson, NV 89014
702-456-3825

Imperial Valley
528 G Street
Brawley, CA 92227
760-344-9085

Las Vegas - Homeless Veterans
912 West Owens Avenue
Las Vegas, NV 89106
702-636-4077

Lompoc
338 S. Dakota Avenue, Bldg. 13850
Vandenberg AFB, CA 93437
805-605-2120

Los Angeles
351 E. Temple Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012
213-253-2677

Mission Valley
8810 Rio San Diego Drive
San Diego, CA 92108
619-400-5000

Oxnard
250 W. Citrus Grove Avenue
Suite 140
Oxnard, CA 93030
805-983-6384

Palm Desert
41865 Boardwalk, Suite 103
Palm Desert, CA 92211
760-341-5570

Pahrump
2100 E. Calvada Boulevard
Pahrump, NV 89048
775-727-7535

Veterans' Health Today
5901 E. 7th St.
Long Beach, CA 90822



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